

Positive Learner Discipline for Public Secondary Schools

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This article sought to establish educators' perceptions on positive learner discipline, where positive discipline focuses on discipline as opposed to punishment, thrives for correction, promotion of responsibility and self-discipline without undermining learner dignity. A qualitative approach to data collection was followed. Convenience and purposive sampling were used for identifying education districts and participants respectively. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Six schools in two districts of the Mpumalanga province were selected for data collection purposes. In total 24 participants were interviewed. Six each of principals, class educators, Life Orientation Skills educators and chairpersons of School Governing Bodies formed the study sample. Document analysis paid attention to incidence record books, schools codes of conduct, minutes for school disciplinary committee and minutes for school safety committee. Data was analysed and presented through thematic content analysis. The findings and literature revealed that positive discipline pursues a preventive approach rather than a punitive one and demands that discipline should be proactive rather than reactive. Participants expressed both positive and negative perceptions of positive discipline.

Key words: *Positive discipline, Corporal punishment, Disciplinary problems*

INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Positive discipline is an approach to discipline that is based on the premise that behaviour is motivated through people seeking a sense of belonging or connecting as well as having meaning in their social context (Prins et al, 2019 & Nigrini, 2016). Positive discipline discards the use of violence as a teaching tool. Instead, it focuses on guiding children's behaviour within an environment where the educator plays a mentorship and guidance role without use of fear

to enforce good behaviour (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), 2012). Positive discipline is enshrined in human rights, mutual respect between educators and learners, preservation of good relationships, and emphasis on participation and co-operation, and the safeguarding of the learners' self-esteem. Further, Nigrini (2016) emphasises that discipline is not aimed at suppressing undesirable behaviour in the short-term but focuses on long-term investment in a child's development through efforts that build responsibility and self-discipline, modelling of positive behaviour and clearly articulated limits and rules that are framed in a positive manner and consistently enforced.

Schools in South Africa continue to experience alarming levels of indiscipline despite the introduction of positive discipline soon after the 1994 new dispensation. According to Du Plessis (2015), discipline problems in South African schools and other countries are rife and the situation is getting worse and even out of hand. Ngwokabuenui (2015) laments the fact that learners have become uncontrollable and highly disrespectful to themselves, teachers, school administrators, parents and to the society as large. One of the major problems associated with lack of discipline in schools is that a considerable amount of time, which could have been utilized for academic progress, is diverted to solving behaviour problems. Educators and other learners fail to function well in an environment marred by violence, threats and chaos. According to Kourkoutas and Wolhuter (2013), research on learner indiscipline aspects in South African schools has revealed that the biggest problem is how to handle them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Alfred Alder's (1870-1937) Individual Psychology theory pioneered the work towards a positive psychology dimension which later gave birth to positive parenting and discipline. Adler's thoughts on striving for perfection or superiority and *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* (community feeling/social interest) are the two tenets of Adlerian psychology whose arguments largely marked the origin of positive psychology. In Adler's understanding, striving for perfection or superiority refers to the human effort channelled toward attainment of competence or self-mastery which serves the purpose of being the central motive of human behaviour. Humans strive for superiority or perfection in their quest for a creative and compensatory answer to the normal and universal feelings of insignificance and inferiority, which epitomize the conviction that one is less than what one should be. Adler (1927) spells out that an individual conducts self-evaluation which generally results in the development of a permanent mood of the nature of a feeling of inferiority which arises and triggers an attempt for a planned final compensation and a life-plan dependent upon the unconscious technique of our thought-apparatus an imagined goal. Schultz and Schultz (2013) state that Adler believed that inferiority feelings are common to all individuals and serve as a motivating force in behaviour. In Adler's view, being human means to feel oneself inferior, hence inferiority is an integral human element and not a sign of weakness or abnormality (Schultz & Schultz, 2013).



The process of compensation facilitates individual growth which emanates from the individual's attempts to overcome real or imagined inferiorities (Watts, 2015). Throughout life, Adler believed that humans are driven by the need to overcome a sense of inferiority and to strive for increasingly better levels of development. Adler suggested that inferiority feelings are the source of all human striving. Watts and Erguner-Tekinalp (2017) reveal that Adler's portrayal of "striving" evolved over time, reminiscent of his use of various words like "completion," "mastery," "perfection," and "superiority" to describe how human beings attempt to move from "the present situation of inferiority, to a perceivably better one, which is superior to the present status. Therefore, striving for perfection or superiority is the natural human desire to move from a perceived negative position to a perceived positive one.

EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES VERSUS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Research conducted in South African schools (Bilatyi, 2012; Ntuli, 2012; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012; Nene, 2013; Van Wyk & Pelsler, 2014; Singo, 2017; Chonco, 2019) present mixed feelings about educators' perceptions on positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment. Ntuli (2012) conducted a study which aimed at investigating ways of managing discipline in selected secondary schools in Limpopo province. Participants in this study indicated that some of the alternative methods to corporal punishment were effective while others were not. While a few applaud positive discipline, most views adopted a negative connotation citing among other things that corporal punishment was more effective in solving disciplinary problems and should therefore be re-introduced in schools.

According to a study conducted by Bilatyi (2012) in the Eastern Cape province, educators at one school revealed that no corporal punishment was administered in the school, and that they relied on alternative positive methods such as detention for committing minor misconduct, counselling, and verbal warnings. This demonstrates the positive appreciation of positive discipline techniques and their effectiveness thereof. Similarly, Chonco (2019) argues that manual punishment was effective for minor discipline while major cases of indiscipline were best tackled using suspension, expulsion, guidance and counselling, peer mediation and educator-student conferences. Nene (2013) states that some participants argued that alternative methods to corporal punishment such as detaining learners were useful because they also get an opportunity to do their schoolwork while in the process of instilling discipline. Incidents of indiscipline dropped sharply because of reliance on positive discipline techniques. A combination of counselling and talking to the learners in private was also applauded for positively shaping the learner's behaviour and providing an opportunity for the educator to understand the root causes of the misbehaviour (Nene, 2013).

Most educators in South Africa have expressed displeasure at the way corporal punishment was outlawed and the subsequent introduction of positive discipline that lacked wide

consultation and effective training. According to Nene (2013), most participants voiced out that the proposed alternative measures to corporal punishment were not effective in controlling learner indiscipline in schools. The alternatives were viewed as time-wasting as the educator had to spend a lot of time trying to deal with a misbehaving learner and talking to parents invited to school. Ntuli's (2013) study carried out in Limpopo province also revealed that alternatives to corporal punishment do not produce the immediate results as is the case with corporal punishment which inflicts pain to effect instant behaviour change. Nene (2013) concurs that most educators noted even though several alternative disciplinary measures were proposed, they however, were not as effective as corporal punishment especially considering that corporal punishment was effective as a deterrent measure because learners were afraid of experiencing the pain. Alternatives to corporal punishment have been perceived by educators as something that does not seem to work, is ineffective, inadequate and a waste of time (Singo, 2017; Chonco, 2019).

Research conducted in different parts of South Africa reported that educators in most cases felt disempowered, helpless, and less respected ever since positive discipline replaced corporal punishment in schools (Chonco, 2019; Nene, 2013; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Van Wyk and Pelsler (2014) state that educators felt that as they were trying to make sense of positive discipline and the use of alternative discipline approaches, their respect faded away. Similarly, Nene (2013) revealed that educators in KwaZulu-Natal argued that their power and authority as educators had been usurped away from them by virtue of the absence of corporal punishment. Chonco (2019) argues that the failure to combat indiscipline using positive techniques in the absence of corporal punishment is distressful. Mestry and Khumalo (2012) noted that educators in the Northwest Province saw the introduction of positive discipline as a frustration to their efforts towards maintaining discipline in the classrooms. The participants expressed that they felt helpless in the whole situation as they did not know what to do with the misbehaving learners. Moyo et al (2014) maintain that educators in South Africa expressed their displeasure in the new system of learner discipline and blamed the Department of Basic Education for not taking the problem of indiscipline in schools seriously.

Ntuli (2012) states that participants argued that changes in the disciplinary mechanisms in South Africa were introduced without consultation hence educators were not happy with the way they were imposed on them without any training. Coupled with the imposition of positive discipline techniques is the emphasis on human rights which gave learners a wrong impression. In support, Venter (2016) noted that educators complained that new system accords too much importance to learners' rights and in the process, they have decided not to enforce any disciplinary action against learners who violate school rules because they were afraid of being reported for violation of learners' rights. Van Wyk and Pelsler (2014) also revealed that educators in South Africa interpreted the new official stipulations as promoting the spare the rod and spoil the child phenomenon. The positive approach to discipline is largely viewed as a foreign phenomenon that does not fit well within the African culture and local context. Ntuli

(2012) highlighted that principals indicated that Black citizens shared an awkward attitude towards the new disciplinary approach. They also indicated that the approach was appropriate for White learners who have been raised under that kind of culture.

Most perceptions educators have about positive discipline techniques are negative and hostile. The continued reliance on corporal punishment despite it having been outlawed is indicative of the challenges that beset the implementation of positive discipline in schools (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). The study therefore intends to develop a model of implementing positive discipline that will address the attitudes, concerns and fears educators have.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE: LEGALITY AND VALUES

In South Africa, schools are mandated to enforce positive discipline. According to Rampa (2014), after the attainment of independence in 1994, the National Department of Education introduced a non-punitive, positive and constructive approach to the maintenance of discipline in schools which consequently banned the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline. Positive discipline is the legally recognized means of maintaining discipline in South African schools. Various legal instruments demonstrate this observation. Coetzee and Mienie (2013) assert that the mandate of having positive discipline as the acceptable means of disciplining learners is expressly stated, and somewhat implied in national law and policy. As per the guidelines for governing bodies the focus of schools' codes of conduct must be positive discipline and that the purpose of a code of conduct is to promote positive discipline.

Positive discipline approach is endowed with the ability to inculcate positive values in learners which transform their conduct to one that is cherished by society for a life-time duration. According to Nigrini (2016), applying positive discipline to teach learners is instrumental in developing life-long skills associated with the values of self-respect, empathy, respect for others and their rights. The positive discipline approach not only facilitates children's holistic development, but also improves the school environment by eradicating fear, teaching children self-discipline, and encouraging greater interest, pleasure and engagement in learning. Nigrini (2016) states that positive discipline is centred on the educator having a good relationship with each learner, building a learner's self-image rather than destroying it. Positive discipline is designed to teach learners to be responsible, respectful, reliable, productive and resourceful members of their communities. According to Rampa (2014), the approach mandates educators to adopt a proactive culture of discipline which teaches learners to accept authority, abide by school rules, exercise self-control, and respect others.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES

Positive discipline approach primarily relies on proactive positive behaviour shaping techniques to instil life-long values in learners that are consistent with prosocial behaviours. In the case where wrongdoing has occurred, the approach also uses carefully chosen corrective techniques that do not humiliate nor temper with the dignity of the learner.

Proactive techniques

According to Coetzee and Mienie (2013), positive discipline pursues a preventive approach rather than a punitive one and demands that discipline should be proactive rather than reactive. In so doing, the approach focuses on supportive behaviours such as mutual respect, teaching, effective communication, collegial planning, self-discipline, modelling, encouragement and motivation (Rampa, 2014).

Creating a positive classroom climate

Positive discipline requires a conducive classroom environment that depicts a culture of belongingness, mutual respect, communication and orderliness. The educator has a responsibility of creating a classroom climate that will permit the development and maintenance of positive discipline values. According to CJCP (2012), the initial step in implementing a positive discipline approach is to generate a classroom environment that is conducive to positive discipline through effective classroom management. Segalo and Rambuda (2014) argue that the primary role of the educator is to establish standards of acceptable behaviour, underpinned by mutual respect, dignity, and tolerance for diversity. Respecting the dignity of each learner basically denotes respect for other's cultures, individual uniqueness and the culture of the classroom (Prins et al, 2019). According to CJCP (2012) the educator must create opportunities to discuss, understand and appreciate the differences among learners including their culture, language, religion, gender and age. Such discussion platforms develop in learners the ability to celebrate differences that exist amongst themselves and also respect diverse points of view of others.

Coetzee and Mienie (2013) aver that the implementation of proactive positive disciplinary approach requires the creation of a positive, supportive and child-friendly teaching and learning environment which recognises and promotes the learner's rights. This environment is further characterised by clear rules, well spelt-out routines and a functional structure. The educator should strive to observe and promote learners' right to be heard and the right to participate in decision-making by giving them fair opportunities to contribute their input. Class meetings touching on issues of conduct and discipline should be regularly held within an atmosphere free of threat and tension. Rampa (2014) asserts that in implementing the positive disciplinary

approach, the educator should aim at creating harmonious relations with learners which consequently provide each learner with a sense of safety.

According to Mabea (2013) in managing discipline, the educator ought to make learners feel emotionally comfortable and physically safe so that they develop self-discipline and accountability for their actions. Sieberer-Nagler (2016) also adds that a positive classroom environment is founded on positive relationships that enable learners to feel safe, respected, welcomed and supported in their learning. Singo (2017) further emphasises that the positive discipline approach thrives on the creation of a classroom environment characterised by warmth, safety and care which fosters in learners the ability to determine their future through setting own goals and establishing the means to achieve them. In this way, learners can regulate their own behaviour. The establishment of rules through a collaborative and democratic approach remains one key aspect of establishing a conducive classroom environment for positive discipline implementation. Huth (2015) illuminates this aspect by arguing that each classroom is to have four to six classroom rules which are simple, specific, clear and measurable. These rules should be communicated clearly to all learners, stated positively, introduced through role play, be on display and be reviewed periodically. For the rules to hold value, there is the need to consistently apply the consequences when rules are not followed (Huth, 2015). Altogether, the creation of a conducive classroom environment for positive discipline entails everything an educator does from creating the sitting arrangement, decorating the room, arranging the chairs, speaking to children, handling their concerns, to putting routines in place (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). Any attempt aimed at introducing a positive discipline regime without a conducive classroom climate as has been outlined above may yield very little positive outcomes.

Teaching

According to Rampa (2014) in positive discipline, educators are required to proactively use the pedagogy of duty to care. Coetzee and Mienie (2013) confirm this by stating that South African educators are also legally mandated to observe and promote human rights through teaching. Teaching entails making learners aware of human rights, code of conduct, classroom rules, self-discipline, and procedures as well as the teaching of social and emotional skills. According to Huth (2015), the teaching philosophy of discipline entails four Cs of classroom management: Commendation, Communication, Consistency and Content. In so doing, the educator shows learners what they ought to do to through clear communication of behavioural and academic expectations (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016). The challenge faced by educators in South Africa as observed by Coetzee and Mienie (2013) is that they find it difficult to incorporate human rights in their curriculum because there is inadequate teaching time and, as yet there is no standard curriculum on human rights.

Modelling

CJCP (2012) asserts that children learn by observing and imitating the adults around them. In the same vein, Sibanda and Mathwasa (2020) argue that observational learning is an effective way of mastering attitudes, values, knowledge, skills, competencies, strategies, beliefs, thoughts and feelings. This implies that positive behaviours and values are acquired unconsciously from watching “significant others” display those behaviours. The survival of any culture is dependent upon the successful portrayal of the norms and values by the role-models as they interact with the rest of the group members on a day-to-day basis (Prins et al, 2019). In a classroom setting, the educators are the models who bear the responsibility of exhibiting positive discipline values to the learners they lead. Further, Belle (2016) states that educators and principals should approach the learners by being exemplary of the desirable behaviour and demonstrate honesty, trustworthiness, respect, integrity and kindness. Educators are expected to demonstrate and model self-discipline in their everyday conduct (Temitayo et al, 2013).

Sibanda and Mathwasa (2016) argue that when an educator demonstrates respect for the dignity of learners and other school personnel, learners are more likely to assimilate and exhibit that behaviour. Belle (2016) adds that when educators show respect, the learners feel valued and empowered, and they will in turn respect the people at school and the entire school community. In this approach, the educator is expected to model the positive behaviour that is expected from children such as kindness, patience and tolerance. According to Tauatswala (2018), educators should be well prepared and ready when they go to class; they should always be on time and organised for lessons. Educators should also be firm and confident in their teaching and decision making as these promote discipline in learners. By demonstrating the right way to behave, the educator serves as a good example of what is expected and proves that the behaviour is possible.

Motivation

For every aspect of human behaviour there is a cause. Human behaviour as viewed by humanists is goal-directed. Motivation plays a pivotal role in precipitating and shaping behaviour in a particular direction. The educator has a role to motivate learners to exhibit positive behaviours while at the same time instilling the intrinsic ability in learners to shape their conduct towards one which portrays acceptable behaviours that are consistent with respect for personal dignity, human rights and dignity of others. Motivation, therefore, is the drive that propels behaviour to a given direction and focus (Prins et al, 2019). There is a relationship among motivation, learning and appropriate behaviour. Motivation gives direction and assists the learner choose a particular behaviour (Belle, 2016). Motivation generates an internal drive that channels behaviour towards a particular goal or task and sustains the individual’s momentum in pursuit of the goal and successful completion of the task (Ntuli, 2012).

Motivation therefore remains an important aspect in the educator's endeavour to effectively maintain learner discipline using positive discipline strategies. Positive discipline is both educative and motivational in nature; therefore, it empowers learners be able to motivate themselves towards prosocial behaviours (Ntuli, 2012).

Motivation can be done through encouragement and praise. Ntuli and Machaisa (2013) assert that learners should be praised for good behaviour and encouraged to abide by the decisions of school authorities. Ntuli (2012) also indicates that giving praise when learners display appropriate behaviour inspires them to model their behaviour on positive reinforcement, and it encourages them to learn self-discipline. Masingi (2017) conducted a study in Limpopo Province of South Africa and concluded that learners appreciate praise and reward as an effective disciplinary measure. Learners in this study indicated that they wanted to be rewarded and praised for good behaviour. Learners who have tried to behave well with notable strides should be praised and even included in class awards or certificates is one example of how motivation can be made by the educators. Positive feedback could be shared with the child's parents. It has been observed that some schools offer a wide range of rewards for positive behaviour, such as lunch with a friend, homework passes, free time in the gym, or a chance to read outside (Ntuli, 2012).

Learners who enjoy the teaching and learning experience are most likely able to behave well since most of their attention is channelled to their schoolwork. Ntuli (2012) identifies two tasks of motivating learners through the teaching and learning experience: initially, to make them more willing to put effort to learn; and second, to structure teaching content and activities so that it is easier for them to learn. Educators should praise learners for outstanding performance and reward them for outstanding academic and sporting achievements. Belle (2016) also emphasizes that learner motivation can also be achieved through increasing feedback during lessons as this can keep learners on track, minimize misunderstanding and highlight areas that require further explanation. Educators who regularly provide feedback to their students regarding their work tend to have higher achieving students who through constructive correction develop positive attitudes that are in line with positive conduct (Belle, 2016). Motivated learners are most likely to be well mannered and properly behaved.

Self-Discipline

The proactive orientation of the positive discipline approach seeks to raise learners with life-long values that enable them to exercise self-discipline. Ultimately, learners should be able to determine how to behave properly and establish harmonious relations with people of diverse backgrounds without anyone instructing or guiding them. Such is the hallmark of the positive discipline approach. The educator has a responsibility to groom learners to arrive at a point where self-discipline becomes the habit of conduct in adhering to school rules and societal laws. However, before educators can attempt to train learners in this regard, Tauatswala (2018)

is of the view that the process should begin with the educators themselves. He argues that educators should exhibit a high level of self-discipline and obedience to regulations.

Singo (2017) states that self-discipline is the ability of an individual to control his or her own behaviour through personal will. Self-discipline is also viewed by Tauatswala (2018) as a product of character development through a form of social consciousness culminating into a state where the learner can set a goal for him/herself and work wholeheartedly towards accomplishing it. Positive discipline requires educators to assist learners in gaining positive characteristics such as self-control, self-discipline, and persistence. In fostering positive discipline, the educator devises ways of teaching learners how to develop self-control and self-direction and thus sharpen their recognition of what is right and wrong (Singo, 2017). Rampa (2014) argues that non-punitive, positive discipline entails the implementation of the self-concept theory and the values that underpin it.

Self-concept and self-discipline are developed when learners and educators deliberately create an environment that allows individuals to think critically but favourably of themselves, their actions, thinking patterns and thus improve the culture of learning and teaching (Rampa, 2014). Singo (2017) further states that self-control cannot be learnt in isolation, hence learners should be exposed to engaging in discussion platforms where they become part of decision-making process about the things that regulate their behaviour. In all essence, self-control has to be taught and practised until it becomes a habit (Singo, 2017). Self-discipline allows learners to be independent and self-reliant in their choice of appropriate behaviour. This lessens the burden on educators as they no longer need to monitor learner behaviour all the time.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is also termed constructivism. According to Creswell et al (2016), interpretivism strongly believes that reality is not objectively created but is subjectively constructed through socially orientated processes. Musingafi and Hlatjwayo (2013) similarly assert that the basic argument of the constructivist narrative is that reality is socially constructed by and between the persons who experience it.

The multiple (collective) case study design was used for this study. It is an approach which allows for exploration of similarities and differences between cases (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). According to De Vos et al (2015), the collective case study is an instrumental study extended to several cases which enables comparisons to be made between cases. Case studies are consistent with the principles of qualitative research. In-depth exploration of positive discipline dynamics was carried out through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with parents represented on the SGB and educators directly involved in handling learner discipline matters in schools. Six public secondary schools located within two education districts in the Mpumalanga province were purposively sampled. Data collected was analysed to reveal

similarities and differences of positive discipline dynamics within and across the two education districts. Comparability of results across districts also assisted in eliminating biases associated with homogeneity aspects of closely located schools.

Six principals, class educators, Life Orientation subject educators, and Chairpersons of SGBs (representing the parents) participated in semi-structured interviews for this study. The study's sample size was 24 participants in total. Document analysis of each school's disciplinary policy, learner code of conduct, discipline record book, and minutes of disciplinary committee sessions were also observed. Content analysis was used to examine qualitative data acquired through interviews and document analysis. Content analysis, according to Choongwa (2018), is the process of categorizing verbal or behavioural data in order to classify and summarise findings. Musingafi and Hlatjwayo (2013) assert that content analysis focuses on documents, texts, or speech to see which themes emerge. Reporting of the data is thus done by way of themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To adhere to the ethical standards of anonymity and confidentiality, schools and participants were identified during the presentation using alphabetic codes. School A, B, C, D, E, and F were the names of the schools. PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, and PF were designated as principals, with PA assigned to School A and PB to School B, and so on. Class teachers, school governing board chairs, Life Orientation Skills Educators, and documents were all coded in the same manner. School A and B are rural, School C and D are semi-urban, and School E and F are entirely urban in this multiple case study design. With this socio-geographic component in mind, the study's findings were triangulated during the presentation. The table below lists the detailed codes used to identify participants and documents:

Table 1

Category	Code name
Schools	SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF
Principals	PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF
School Governing Board Chairpersons	CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF
Class educators	CTA, CTB, CTC, CTD, CTE, CTF
Life Skills Orientation educators	LSTA, LSTB, LSTC, LSTD, LSTE, LSTD
School Code of Conduct	CCA, CCB, CCC, CCD, CCE, CCF
Disciplinary Committee Minutes	DCA, DCB, DCC, DCD, DCE, DCF
Incidents Record Book	IRA, IRB, IRC, IRD, IRE, IRF
School Safety Committee Minutes	SCC

The findings of this study recommended that a framework for the effective implementation of positive discipline should adopt a multi-stakeholder approach at all stages of implementation.

Themes emanating from the views of participants include stakeholder consultative engagement, stakeholder training, harmonisation of home and school disciplinary practices, establish vibrant learner representative councils and infusion of positive discipline into school curriculum.

Theme 1: Stakeholder engagement

Successful undertaking of a change process requires that all stakeholders be taken on board from the outset. Cooperation with a change process is guaranteed under such conditions. The findings of this study revealed that a proper framework for implementation of positive discipline in public secondary schools should include engagement of all key stakeholders in a consultative process that seeks to develop a positive learner discipline concept that speaks to the local context. The consultative process should target educators, parents and learners. Their views will be instrumental in developing a positive discipline concept that is meaningful and acceptable to all. Participants spoke in agreement and stressed that:

The department should hold wide consultations with all relevant stakeholders [PF]

The department should outsource specialists in that field to engage with educators, SGBs, and the learners' formation. This will assist all stakeholders to understand their expectations. [SA]

Parental involvement is key. The department should work collaboratively with all stakeholders. No one should be left out. [PD]

Learners should be included in positive discipline policy review and drafting of its implementation framework. [CTE]

Stakeholders bemoaned the fact that they were not consulted during the policy formulation process and in the subsequent development of an implementation framework of positive discipline. Principals, educators, and parents complained that they were left out in the decision-making process for the adoption of positive discipline. A top-down approach was adopted in implementing positive discipline. Others considered the implementation as an imposition of a foreign model of discipline which lacks local context relevance. The system was just copied and pasted from foreign countries without considering the situation in Africa as a continent and South Africa as a country.

Bowlings (2018) identifies implementation difficulties which among others included the use of complex strategies. Such strategies include among others the top-down approach which imposes rather than engage all stakeholders. A study conducted by Moyo et al (2014) assert that educators mentioned that their views were never sought when the positive discipline was introduced hence this could have contributed to their continued use of corporal punishment and

the non-use of alternative disciplinary measures. Rampa (2014) also argue that positive discipline was imposed on educators by the Department of Basic Education. They also highlight that educators, parents, and other religious groups in South Africa felt that the government has looked down upon their right to be consulted in the education of their children. Van Wyk and Pelsier (2014) reveal that educators in South Africa interpreted the new official stipulations as promoting the spare the rod and spoil the child phenomenon. The positive approach to discipline is largely viewed as a foreign phenomenon that does not fit well within the African culture and local context.

Theme 2: Training of stakeholders

The weakest link in the implementation of positive learner discipline approach is lack of knowledge, understanding and skills in positive learner discipline principles and techniques. Training on positive discipline practices should be conducted to educators, parents, learner representatives and community leaders. Participants indicated that training and workshops regarding positive discipline should be available to student educators and in-service educators respectively.

In educator training institutions, positive discipline should be taught extensively. [CTA]

We require in-service workshops for educators in the field and other stakeholders such as community leaders and parents. [CTD]

There is need to conduct workshops for educators so that the educators can understand and move away from the confusion currently in place and begin to apply better ways of dealing with misbehaving learners. [LSTA]

The department should empower everybody including parents so the whole process begins at home. [CTC]

Educators need to be trained properly rather than being told to do 'a, b, c' by the ministry. [LSTC]

Government must use specialists in positive discipline like you (referring to the researcher) to train us on what the new approach is all about. [SC]

Participants complained about the lack of training for principals, educators and parents on positive learner discipline principles and strategies. This created several challenges for educators and parents who run short of alternatives and appropriate skills for handling indiscipline cases in an environment where corporal punishment has been outlawed. This results in cases where educators and parents opt for other alternative means through trial and

error which might not be in line with positive learner discipline values. In the process, positive learner discipline fails to achieve its intended purpose.

Strategies explored in the literature, such as creating a positive classroom climate, teaching, modelling and self-discipline were not identified by the participants. This presents a gap in the implementation of positive discipline in South African public secondary schools and validation of claims by participants that they were not trained about positive discipline. Considering the above narratives, training on positive discipline approaches should be part of the pre-service educator training curriculum. Programmes for training in-service educators, parents and learners need to be organised and put into action. This will assist all stakeholders in gaining an understanding of the essences of positive discipline.

Theme 3: Harmonisation of home and school disciplinary practices

Having trained parents, learners and other stakeholders on positive learner parenting and discipline techniques, it is imperative to create a framework where implementation commences at home and extends to the school. This harmonisation of approaches used for parenting and handling learners at school makes it possible for educators and parents to work hand in hand in fostering the development of positive discipline values in learners.

Educators and parents should guide learners together and apply the same approach. Positive discipline should begin at home and continue at school. [LSTF]

It is difficult for the school to talk positive discipline while the home does not. The school and home should operate using the same approach. [PB]

Positive discipline would work best where there is full cooperation of the parent. [PA]

Educators observed that the implementation of positive discipline approach in schools suffered a blow because of a one-sided scenario where positive discipline is only practised at school while the home uses corporal punishment and other punitive measures. Parents should raise their children through application of positive parenting techniques. This makes it easy for the school to build on the values that have already been infused by the family as the learner grows. Challenges experienced at home in instilling discipline using positive discipline strategies can be discussed with educators and other professionals available at community level for practicable solutions. The above statements emphasise the fact that positive discipline should begin at home. Parents should raise their children through application of positive parenting techniques. This makes it easy for the school to build on the values that have already been infused by the family as the learner grows.

The successful implementation of positive discipline would be possible when the home and school agree on a unified system of discipline that shuns violence and pursue positive

behaviour strategies jointly. This is in line with Obadire and Sinthumule (2021) who state that parents, in their capacity as first educators, should inculcate values and morals in their children to differentiate between right and wrong.

Theme 4: Establish vibrant Learner Representative Councils

Schools need to establish Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) made up of leaders chosen by themselves who will serve as a bridge between the school and the learner establishment. LRCs also require periodic training to be effective in the role they play.

Learner representative councils need to be trained and engaged so that they assist in mediating between the school and the learners. [PC]

Document analysis confirmed existence of Learner representative Councils through the following excerpt drawn from the minutes of the School Safety committee:

Learner Representative Council of Learners agreed to submit information (report) to educators as it is easy for them to get information from friends. They will round the classes from Grade 8 to 12 and ask reps to report all incidents in class. [SCC]

The establishment of learner representative councils in schools is a concept that subscribes to good governance principles. Participatory approaches to leadership and problem solving such as this one tends to yield positive outcomes. An environment characterised by mutual respect between educators and learner representatives are most likely able to eradicate behaviour challenges affecting schools. As part of a programme for implementing positive discipline in schools, the involvement of learners in all aspects of learner discipline and welfare is key. LRCs ought to be involved in the drafting and enforcement of school rules as well as in instilling learner discipline. An environment characterised by mutual respect between educators and learner representatives is most likely able to eradicate behaviour challenges affecting schools.

Theme 5: Infuse positive discipline into school curriculum

Some participants suggested that positive discipline principles, values and approaches should be taught as part of the school curriculum for easy understanding and acceptance. Content related to the localised version of positive discipline could be infused or integrated into the Life Orientation and Social Studies curriculum. Participants had to say the following:

One way of making positive discipline to be easily understood is to add it to the syllabus. When it is taught as part of certain subjects, like Life Orientation Skills, then educators and learners will grasp it better. [PE]



Government must include it in the curriculum somehow. This will help all of us to understand including the learners. Maybe it should come under Social Studies. But it should feature somehow. [CTB]

Worth noting is the fact that most educators lack proper understanding of positive discipline. The current use of discipline methods that violate the rights and dignity of learners such as cleaning toilets and digging holes demonstrate sufficient evidence to this lack of understanding. Provision of a detailed content, packaged with clear aims, objectives and activities for instruction and assessment would go a long way to assist educators and learners come to understand and appreciate positive discipline.

CONCLUSION

Educators have varied perceptions about positive learner discipline which fall within the broad framework of its definition, strategies used for instilling discipline and evaluations on its effectiveness. Educators demonstrated a shallow understanding of positive discipline. In their definitions some professed total ignorance about it while others viewed it as non-violent means of handling learner discipline. Others viewed it as an approach that is rooted on human rights. The main principle that distinguishes positive discipline from other approaches which has to do with proactive strategies aimed at self-discipline was never mentioned. In terms of its effectiveness in instilling learner discipline, positive discipline received mixed reactions. Some educators considered it a good approach that motivates learners to do well and produce responsible behaviours while others commented that it had its fair share of successes and challenges. Others considered it as an approach that is good on paper but difficult to implement. On the extreme side, some argued that positive discipline was a Western system devoid of African cultural values which is responsible for the high rates of learner indiscipline currently prevailing in schools. Over and above, educators have a limited understanding of positive discipline and view it as an ineffective approach to learner indiscipline.

Lack of training and absence of stakeholder participation, overemphasis on learners' rights and conditioning on corporal punishment contributed towards the ineffective implementation of positive discipline. Stakeholders were not involved in the policy formulation process and adoption of positive discipline. Implementation took a top-down approach of imposition and did not accommodate grassroots views. Principals, educators and members of SGBs were not trained on how to instil discipline using the positive learner discipline approach. The introduction of positive learner discipline was characterised by an over-emphasis on human rights aimed at protecting children from physical abuse and the brutality of corporal punishment. This gave learners a wrong impression about life and created in educators a feeling of being dethroned. Educators and parents who believe and rely on the use of corporal punishment render efforts of instilling discipline through the positive discipline approach fruitless.



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